

SECRET: Comments for Senator Mansfield

Followers of Buddhism are divided into two major sects, each with a number of offshoots. Tibet is the stronghold of the Lamaistic branch of Buddhism which also has adherents in Mongolia, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and among the ethnic Tibetans in the Chinese provinces surrounding Tibet. Lamaism includes only a small proportion of all Buddhists.

The word "lama" is used only in connection with this branch of Buddhism and denotes a monk. The reincarnation of various high figures in the Buddhist pantheon, or "living Buddhas," customarily have titles such as the Dalai Lama. In actual practice the Dalai Lama is regarded by Tibetans as the spiritual head of their denomination.

The Buddhists of Southeast Asia are adherents of the Hinayana school and tend to regard the Lamaistic offshoot of the other major sect as having been corrupted by the animism native to Tibet before the introduction of Buddhism. The peoples and religious leaders of Southeast Asia have been unusually outspoken in expressing their sympathy for the Dalai Lama and the plight of the Tibetans generally. However, while paying the Dalai Lama reverence as a holy figure, his comments on doctrine would not be considered applicable to Southeast Asia. The Hinayana Sect has its own "Living Buddhas" whose interpretations of dogma would be recognized in SEA.